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THE

Occult Side of Christianity

The Coming of the Christ

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THEOSOPHY A LIGHT-BEARER

THE student of the Ancient Wisdom, commonly known as Theosophy, does not approach the subject of Christianity with the torch of the iconoclast. We challenge, truly, but we do not condemn, but ever strive to synthesize, harmonize and explain. We maintain that there are great and beautiful truths hidden under the sometimes repellent doctrines of the Church, truths so broad, so cosmic and significant in character that when understood a great flood of light is thrown upon modern theology. We endeavor, by a careful analysis of the Christian scriptures, to bring forth those hidden jewels of truth that have been long covered with the rubbish of centuries.

TRUTH LIES HIDDEN IN ALL RELIGIONS

Students of Theosophy agree that each religion in the world has its purpose and one cannot be considered inferior to another. Wherever a religion is found, we see in that particular form of teaching, the best means of inspiration for that nation and people. We do not, therefore, go about seeking to uproot and destroy the beliefs of others, for in that act we would leave them bereft of their spiritual food and be without the power to nourish them with our own. Research into the many religions through a study of history and occult science and investigation, has pointed to a common source for all —Divine Wisdom. We hold that each religion has been given to the world, as the need has arisen, by the Great Ones—Supermen—Who guide and teach the race.

Many followers of Christianity, who have with earnest minds approached its teaching only to be repelled by the devitalized remnants found within the Church, have at last come into the Theosophical Society only to find there the same teachings glorified by the radiance of the mysteries so long hidden. Such are then eager to return to their own faith, to bring to it the vitality and understanding they have gained through their deeper study of the inner side of things. Christianity is well suited to the Western mind; if America knew and understood the real teaching that Christ gave, every church in our land would be packed from altar to vestibule with the most intelligent of our people. Instead of this condition we find in many orthodox churches meagre attendance and scantier interest.

There are three and a half millions of people in the city of New York alone who have no church affiliation. Why, may we ask, does not the working man go to church? Do you know that the American laboring man is entirely out of touch with Christianity? Indeed, in some respects he is hostile to its influence.

REAL CHRISTIANITY NEEDED

Any man or nation devoid of religion is devoid of ideals, and a man or nation without an ideal is in peril. And America's future is fraught with peril for this reason. In these days great changes and readjustments in our economic and industrial system are taking place. At this time great wisdom and self-restraint are needed to guide us through a wilderness of conflict. The most important factor in this conflict is the toiler. If he be without a religion and without the ideal of Brotherhood, which is all that religion means; if he be fed on class hatred and animosities, he will be guided in that revolution by instinct; and when great masses of men, acting in violent concert, are ruled by instinct, then God save us!

We therefore labor for the restoration of the hidden truths of Christianity, that through the beauty and joy there hidden, we may beguile

men from their baser instincts and stem the tide of materialism.

There would be no need for Christian Science, for New Thought, for Spiritualism or for Theosophy if the churches of the West would teach true Christianity.

SPIRITUAL HEALING LOST TO CHURCH

Christ taught his disciples to "Go, preach, saying the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils. Freely ye have received, freely give." He said that all others who believe on Him and served in His name might do healing miracles. And we know from the record left us in the New Testament that the apostles did heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead and cast out devils, and they acquired the power from within, in Christ's Name, exercising through this power that peaceful and joyous dominion over nature that He so gracefully exemplified.

Is it any wonder that the life blood of the Church is being drained into the arteries of Christian Science when so fundamental and animating a doctrine as this is ignored?

CHURCH IGNORES PROOFS OF LIVING DEAD

And the teachings of Spiritualism are no less orthodox. What are the elements of Spiritualism against which Christianity may appeal?

When all prejudice is laid aside, we find that Spiritualism is a protest against the accepted Christian teaching that between this world and the after world stretches an impassable gulf. At death we pass over this gulf on an ethereal bridge. At the other end the passage is sealed and no one may return.

Spiritualism teaches that this impassable chasm is non-existent, a sheer figment conjured from human fears; that the supposed gulf is really only a thin veil that dimly separates the living and the dead.

Is this not scriptural doctrine? Is not the Bible full of spiritualistic teaching? The Old Testament is one long record of angelic appearances, visitations from the dead, clairvoyant experiences, dreams and visions.

In the second book of Kings we have a most striking illustration of the parallel between Spiritualism and Biblical teaching.

The appearance of the handwriting on the palace walls of King Belshazzar is one of the most common phenomena in modern spiritualistic circles.

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE THAT THE DEAD LIVE

The Spiritualists are, aside from Biblical evidence, quite right in their assertions that the dead DO live and may return to us. In this respect we have the most convincing testimony of some scientists of eminence in the modern world. A few years ago Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir William Crookes and Alfred Wallace (collaborator with Darwin), all men of highest scientific standing, noting the prevalence of spiritualistic belief and regarding its spread as another evidence of the ease with which untrained minds accept baseless delusion, determined to probe and expose its fallacies, employing the scientific methods of research. The record of their experiments has been published, so it only remains to be said that, after a number of years of rigid and painstaking investigation, under the severest scientific conditions these men were obliged in all honor to accept the philosophy they set out to demolish.

Alfred Wallace is today an avowed spiritualist, and Sir Oliver Lodge, before a great and august body of scientists, recently declared, "My brothers, I KNOW the dead live. I have seen and talked with them."

Is it strange then that there are four hundred thousand avowed spiritualists in America today and ten times as many more who have accepted

what Spiritualism has to teach? Why should the Church fail to recognize this most important phase of sacred teaching?

NEW THOUGHT

New Thought writers assert that man is not inherently bad or depraved, but is essentially and positively divine; that he does not attain to divinity by any chance mental operations, but is, was and ever has been a part of One Imperishable Existence who knows neither beginning nor end; that within each is a God of Light slumbering in the matrix of matter; that all we need do is to awaken that sleeping God, and behold the Kingdom is found, and with it all of the abundance of power, health, wealth, joy and success that are the everlasting concomitants of His Glory.

THE CHRIST WITHIN

This teaching is taken fresh from the lips of the Master and His disciples. When Christ was asked where the kingdom lay, He said, "It is within." This statement must have astounded the crude, earth-bound Syrians of that day, who thought the Kingdom was a glorious New Jerusalem away off in the skies, that shone with jewelled gates, streets of gold and alabaster and jasper walls.

The amazement of the multitudes grew and He spake again, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened." The last parable is most significant to a student of higher thought. In this simile the Master gives the key to His meaning. The three measures of meal are the three bodies of the personality which each man wears—the physical body of action; the astral or feeling body of desire; the mental or cognitional body of thought. The leaven is the Christ indwelling, which is within, the Kingdom of light and power and glory. The process of growth in

evolution involves the slow leavening of these three garments with the effluence of the Christ nature; a gradual lifting through aspiration until they are transmuted, resurrected and glorified by the Spirit.

Christ recognized that this Spirit within was common to all and the source of all life and abundance. He said, "Of myself I can do nothing. The Father in me, He doeth the works."

The neglect of this one teaching alone is so serious that Christianity cannot survive its loss. If Christianity ever regains a permanent and enduring hold on the American mind, it will be through this teaching, which is today making so powerful an appeal to the bold, aspiring and dominant minds of our people.

THEOSOPHY COMBINES REASON AND SPIRIT

And why is Theosophy? Theosophy exists because it has food and drink in abundance for all, and the world is ahunger and athirst. It is almost blasphemous to assert that the people of our country are naturally irreligious and depraved, that they are so absorbed in their own gains and pleasures that they have no place for Christ and Christianity. The one hundred millions of America want a religion that warms and refines the heart and at the same time does no violence to reason. They want, in very fact, the Christ, but they want that Christ unchurched, unshackled, an eternal symbol of the Christ Child within their own hearts. And they have that right, for Christ belongs to no church, to no people, but to ALL.

SECRET TEACHINGS

Serious and lamentable as these omissions from the church teaching may appear, there is yet another fault in modern ministry that in time would destroy the strongest church. We refer to the loss of the mystic side of Christianity and the pathetic efforts of the clergy to nourish all their followers on the purely exoteric and historic

truths. In cruder words, we are all fed out of the same spoon. The ministers say there is but one truth that all need accept, and once accepted we have salvation and attainment forevermore. Just one or two simple truths and we are in the Kingdom forever.

If an Emerson, with his superman consciousness, his royal love of his fellows, the profound and mystical learning so gracefully embodied there, if Emerson went to church and sat on the front row and beside him sat a low-browed, ignorant, unlettered Hotentot, both would receive the same spiritual pabulum. No church can survive such a system of teaching. The instruction must be gathered to meet the intelligence and unfoldment of each. There is milk for the sucklings in Christianity, but there is also "strong meat for strong men." The trouble is that we are trying to feed the strong men on the suckling's milk and they are not nourished. Soon they starve and begin to search elsewhere for food to sustain the spiritual life.

MYSTIC CHRISTIANITY LOST

Every religion has its mystery side, that part which is veiled from the multitude because the pure, rich truth that it contains is too strong, too elevated and illuminating for the babes to receive. It is this mystic side that Christianity has lost. The early Church had not lost it; there were many mystics and followers of the hidden side in the early days and some of these wrote about the "Mysteries of God hidden in a Symbol."

If we read the works of St. Clement and Origen, two of the most illustrious of these early Christian Fathers, we are struck with the depth and profundity of the teachings attributed to Jesus. We find them not at all simple, but deeply occult and mystical. Origen says that the teachings Christ gave to His disciples "in the house," or in places apart, formed an important part of the treasures of the Church.

That such teaching was given is amply illus-

trated in the narrative of Christ's ministry. "And when they were alone those that were about him asked of him a parable, and He said, 'Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God, but to all them that are without, these things are done in parable.'"

"Therefore speak I to them in parables, because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand.

"But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear."

It was prophesied in the Old Testament that Jesus would "utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." It is apparent that He fulfilled that prophecy and freely told His disciples in places apart the deep things of God, the mysteries of the Kingdom; but not all the mysteries, for later we hear Him say to the apostles, on the eve of His death, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." How significant is this remark when we remember that for nearly three years these men had been communing with Him, had sat at His feet, basking in the radiance of that great aura, had shared in the mighty stimulus of His presence, were members of His church, little children in Christ, and yet they were unable to receive what He had to tell them. Does this not give us a hint of the mystic depths in the teachings He came to give?

These teachings given to the disciples are a part of a great body of occult facts that are now given freely through the Theosophical Society. Though lost to the Church, they may be found in all purity in the Theosophical literature.

You ask, What are these truths so deep and ennobling, that the Church has forgotten? We reply that they concern all of the creeds of the Church and form the luminous background for these teachings.

PRAYER

We may briefly illustrate by reference to prayer. Most of us find in "prayer" a singularly

baffling problem. Does God alter His great cosmic plan every time He answers a prayer? Why should He make a plan and then incessantly change it to suit the little cells in His body that supplicate and clamor for things heretofore denied them? In every prayer, and by prayer I do not mean the deep meditation and communion with God that seeks only union in Him, or the petition for light and strength for high undertakings, such prayers, of course, answer themselves—but the prayer that asks for visible material relief; in every supplication of this kind the suppliant, in substance, cries: "Great Giver of all, I am in dire need of something which you overlooked in your endowment; you made all things good except my particular affairs, so please change the plan to include this thing for me."

We pray to God to sanctify our commercial undertakings, to make the sun shine when the rain is falling, and to bring rain when the sky is clear. It is a curious implication of Divine incompetence for a man of faith, and yet the most astounding thing about it is that prayers of this kind are answered. A vast amount of credible evidence is available to show that prayers are answered. How can we explain it?

Theosophy, from its storehouse of well-nigh inexhaustible facts, assures us that no miracle occurs when prayers are answered. Nor does God stoop down at each behest and alter His original purpose for that individual, but, on the contrary, the phenomenon of response occurs in obedience to the inflexible law of cause and effect.

When we lift our minds in earnest and concentrated desire for any object, we create in the invisible world of thought a whirling vortex. It matters not if we are petitioning to a higher power. A strong vibration of this kind acts on the plane where it is liberated, and the whirlpool of desire becomes an attractive center, a magnetic focus, tending to draw from all points of the compass the elements of fulfillment. All who pray earnestly and with faith shall receive. It may require time and patience, but the law will not be denied. Prayers indeed

frequently answer themselves through the operation of this law of causation.

FORGIVENESS OF SIN

We have, in the doctrine of forgiveness of sin, a striking illustration as well of the confusion of clear thought with dogmatic errors. That one may, during a long and evil life, bring pain and grief to thousands, and may by violence and wrong hold back the advancement of the whole human race, and yet that such a person may at the gateway of death repent and be absolved of his sin, and go pure, spotless and unencumbered into the Kingdom of Joy—this is a soul-darkening illusion and without scriptural foundation. This teaching has made a million atheists, and does violence to reason and the sense of right.

"God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." This scriptural statement is a complete expression of the law and is supplemented in detail by the Master's words, "For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." He did not say, good men, bad men, Christian, Jew or Roman, but MEN.

If one's regret leads him into better ways, he has a sense of forgiveness, a clean, healthy, joyous sense of noble purpose and endeavor, for, as Maeterlinck says, "The acknowledgement of one's fault precipitates chemically its poison, which becomes innocent crystals in the bottom of memory." Our sins are overflowed, submerged, drowned in the new sense of truth, and the crystals at the bottom become the foundation of the mellow draught of sympathy and understanding. This forgiveness represents a new washed personality that has lost its unclean and corroding consciousness and is again in joyous and peaceful communion with the Christ within, who atones for sin.

NATURE EXACTS PAYMENT

But does the fruit of sinning cease with the

sin? Does the drunkard who reforms have a perfect body again? Must he not, his life through, carry the sodden and stiffened body, the wracked and tortured nerves so long abused? If you take the life of another in a moment of passion, you may, by repentance and a life of virtue, gain forgiveness and complete freedom from the pangs of guilt, but what about the life you have taken? Will nature demand no restitution? Has she been appeased? What about the law of perfect justice that brings to each his earnings?

Where and when do we restore to Nature the life we have taken? Theosophy tells us that the law is gentle, but inexorable. We must pay the debt ourselves. None else may pay. Somewhere, sometime, we must meet the man whose life thread we severed, and by long service and meek tribute make faultless restitution. In this respect we must remember that this life is but a fragment of our destiny. We shall come again and again into manifestation, until we stand perfected in the image of God.

VICARIOUS ATONEMENT

With great reverence and with equal confidence we approach the doctrine of the Vicarious Atonement. One who has not studied the development of the Church during the first six centuries A. D. can form no adequate idea of the modifications this doctrine has undergone or how totally the modern teaching is at variance with the real teaching of the Christ. It will perhaps not be irreverent to say, without emphasis or prolonged discussion, that the accepted idea that Christ, the only begotten Son of God, was sent to the world to ransom and redeem humanity from its sin and guilt and for that purpose died on the cross that all who believed on Him might be saved, is not, in truth, a clear or accurate representation of what He came to teach. It is rather an outgrowth and development of the old tribal traditions of the Jews where God is depicted as an angry and avenging deity who requires con-

stantly to be placated and appeased by sacrifices and blood offerings.

When a tribe or nation desired to undertake an expedition or engage in war they offered the slain bodies of countless animals on the altar of their God as a bribe for his favor. We find in the modern church teaching, until quite recently, the same old concept, that God was angry with the world, but His wrath was appeased and extinguished when His only begotten and beloved Son was slain on the cross in atonement for the sins of men.

THE MISSION OF CHRIST

We seen in Christ's ministry a wholly different purpose. He came to save men, truly. He came not to save them from God, but from themselves. Man is his own lawgiver. Within the sanctuary of the soul is the Supreme Court, prosecution, defense and jury. From the ruling of that court there is no appeal. Christ came to save us from the sin of selfishness.

He had trodden the long path we are treading and had found His way back home, a glorified Son of the Father. He did not intend that He should be considered a unique expression of the Deity, a miraculously created being who should ever sit in grandeur on the right hand of the Father, judging the living and the dead. He is our loving Elder Brother. He came to us at a time when the world was filled with blood-lust and human slavery, came in a human body in a human way, filled with human love and human purposes. He was divine truly, for the Father dwelt within Him and He dwelt in the Father, which is another way of saying that God dwells in the hidden temple. "Ye are the temples of God and the spirit of God dwelleth in you." But Christ did not think of Himself as unique in His divinity.

The miracles He performed were done by the Father within. "Of myself I can do nothing. The Father in me, He doeth the works." That same Father dwelt in others, and He recog-

nized the fact and saw instinctively in every man the impress and image of divinity. This is why he consorted with sinners and loved them. He saw behind the walls of flesh, to that germ of immortality and omnipotence that would unfold forever and ever.

ATTAINING PERFECTION BY REBIRTH

"Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect," he entreated. Why should He enjoin us to become as perfect as the One guiding power and mind of the Universe who creates and holds in place with His granite will the wheeling stars and planets in space, unless He saw in us the irrefutable genius of the Lord of all. He did not mean, of course, that we should expect such boundless attainment in a single life, nor did He expect us to unfold it in Heaven, for Heaven is a place of rest. He implied that we should express that perfection by steady spiritual growth through the ages.

Truly, if we had only this one life to live, perfection and its immunity from sorrow and failure would be a dream and a delusion and His words but flowers of speech. Happily we know that we come again to this earth, for "Nature is waiting with eager expectation the appearing of the Sons of God," the apostle tells us, and the Sons of God are taught through experience in earth life. One life is a day at school. We come again tomorrow and yet again.

The idea of Reincarnation is as yet much a mystery to the Western world though it is one of the oldest ideas of immortality, and more than one-third of the human race today accept it. It is because of its mystery and depth perhaps that Christ spoke of it only to His disciples, and He was not certain that they could receive it, for when His disciples sought to know whether John the Baptist was a true prophet, when they had been expecting Elias, Jesus said: "If ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." The return of the soul of Elias into a new body, called

John the Baptist, is but an instance of a process that is incessantly occurring in the human race. It is but a symbol of that recurring night and day in the manifestation of your soul and mine.

OUR HOPE

The restoration of these benign truths to Christianity will mark a world-wide religious revival. Without them, church attendance will steadily decline.

The world is awearied and distracted with vain efforts to believe the unbelievable. We recently heard a minister speak to a great audience of college students. He said, among other things, "that human nature was bad and depraved; conceived in sin and born in iniquity. We never can hope to rise above our degradation except through belief on the mission and salvatory power of Jesus Christ." What a minister may hope to gain by such preachments we are at a loss to understand, but we are sure that the doctrine of essential sin and depravity is not a blessing to the world, but an unmitigated curse. To think evil is to be evil. We become like that upon which we brood. One who starts out in life with a sense of guilt and sin must be a hero to rise above that handicap.

If you have a child, would you rather he think of himself as an angel or a devil? To the man of vision the question answers itself. A child who thinks of himself as an angel will become an angel; he is constantly creating thoughts and symbols of purity and beauty. These become actual presiding entities in his atmosphere, and they act and react upon him; moulding and modifying his character. Thoughts are things. Starting out in life with a bad image is like starting on a race with feet chained to the starting post.

FREEDOM FROM BIGOTRY

We may all feel encouraged by the growth of liberality in the Church. Never before was there

such a loosening of the shackles and prejudice and bigotry. Some time ago a heart-broken mother in British Columbia wrote to her pastor that her only son had been blown to atoms in the trenches in France. He had never been baptized, had not accepted Christ. Was his soul lost? There can be but one answer to this question from the viewpoint of the orthodox teaching. The soul of this boy is doomed.

But the minister promptly answered, "No," repudiating with painless promptitude the old doctrine of damnation. And not only this, but the same question submitted to the other half-dozen ministers in the city brought the same heretical response. This is most encouraging, for it suggests to us the time when the clergy will repudiate the whole concept of damnation and eternal punishment and substitute therefore the idea of universal salvation and punishment adequate and commensurate with the offense committed.

THE COMING OF CHRIST

It may be, too, that His promise made so long ago that He would come again, is about to be fulfilled. When we gaze across the world and see the tremendous upheavals in progress, with class arrayed against class, nation against nation, we wonder if these terrific contests are not a part of the plan for the augmentation of the new era. We wonder if it is not the clearing of the stage for a new world drama in which Christ will play the leading role. With the cessation of the great European war the world is facing a social and economic crisis of the first magnitude. We need wise leadership as never before, for in this period we must undergo a social reconstruction that will shake the world to its foundation. A great genius is needed to lead us in this hour, not a lawyer, statesman, soldier or savant, but a sagacious spiritual guide who can turn us from paths of destruction into paths of peace, who can set the keynote for the new civilization and inaugurate the essentials of a world state.

When He comes again, He will restate in new and modern terms the age-old religious truths, the truths about God and man, spiritual verities that may be received by white, black, brown and yellow men; a world-wide religious impulse that shall be a re-proclamation of the essentials of Christianity, Buddhism, Mohammedanism and the other great religions of the past. And best of all He will bring to us the inspiration of His own Divine personality, the healing touch of those strong hands of fellowship, and will say as He did before, "Love ye one another even as I have loved you."